



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, May 30 – June 5, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

The field season is in full swing and FWP wolf staff and volunteers out scouting and trapping. Lance and Bradley have been trapping and scouting in the East Fork of the Bitterroot. Laudon is working in Glacier National Park.

FWP encourages hunters, landowners, and other outdoor enthusiasts to report wolves through the online reporting button or to send in one of the pre-printed postcards available at all FWP offices, many US Forest Service offices, and license providers throughout the state. Information provided by the public helps FWP more accurately monitor wolf numbers and distribution in Montana.

Flights: None.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 6/1 WS investigated a calf killed on private land in South Meadow Creek on the southeast end of the Tobacco Root Mountains and confirmed it as a wolf kill. Traps were set for a collar and release effort. The ranch hand has seen 3 blacks in the area a time or two over the winter. It is unknown at this time how many wolves or if there is pack activity in this area.

On 6/4 WS investigated a steer thought to be killed by wolves in the Little Snowies. Necropsy results showed no sign of hemorrhaging from predation and the steer was scavenged on (possibly by a bear). WS updated the landowner on the regulations to protect livestock. Sightings of up to three wolves have been reported in the area during late winter/early spring of 2009.

On 6/4 WS confirmed 7 ewes killed and 3 ewes injured by wolves near Martinsdale (an additional ewe was found dead on 6/5). On 6/5 WS confirmed 3 dead bucks and one buck injured, 8 dead lambs and 5 injured lambs by wolves – again Martinsdale (two of the injured lambs do not look like they will survive). The second landowner took a picture of a gray wolf on the property on 5/31 and told a story of their dog nose to nose with the wolf with no conflict. It was hard to tell if the wolf had a collar or not. On 6/6 fladry was strung around pastures in both places, which are about 8 miles apart. No radio collars were heard in the area on the 5th or 6th. WS has been authorized to remove two wolves. Kill permits for two wolves were issued to both landowners.

Outreach and Education Activities

On 6/3, Sime gave a presentation about wolves and Montana's program at a meeting of the Burros Club in Butte. About 25 people attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

On a 5/27 telemetry flight, SW265M collar (Baker Mountain pack near Big Timber) was found on mortality mode. The collar was retrieved on 5/28 and cause of death is under investigation.

On 6/2, Idaho Fish and Game biologists contacted FWP and said that one of the radio collars in the Fish Creek pack was found on mortality mode. The Fish Creek pack is a border pack shared between ID and MT, and IDFG has been working on placing more radio collars in the pack via darting. IDFG will plan to investigate and determine if it is a shed collar or the wolf is dead.

Other

The FWP Wolf Program is recruiting to fill a seasonal field conservation technician position. The job is based in Missoula and will be filled on or not long after July 1. Application materials include a state application, supplemental questions, and reference checks. The closing date is June 15, 2009. Apply online, see: <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/employment/currentOpenings.aspx>

NEW -- Delisting Litigation Formally Starts

On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. A request for a preliminary injunction (which if granted by the Court, would keep federal ESA protections in place during the litigation) has not been filed at this time. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will seek to intervene in the Missoula Court on behalf of the State of Montana. Montana supports federal efforts to delist wolves.

Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

Background for Montana

On May 4, gray wolves in Montana were delisted. Conservation and management are guided by Montana laws, administrative rules (ARM 12.9.1301 – 12.9.1305), and the state's federally-approved plan. Wolves in Montana were automatically reclassified to a "species in need of management" statewide on May 4. The gray wolf is protected statewide, though individual wolves may be hazed, harassed, or killed if seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to

kill livestock. Incidents must be reported and each will be investigated. Wolves may also be killed to protect human life. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP wolf web page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season: FWP and the FWP Commission continue efforts to develop and prepare for a potential 2009 season. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place for a potential fall 2009 season. But FWP and the FWP Commission must still establish a quota (the total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters) for 2009. The public is being asked to comment on a range of statewide range quotas of 26, 75, and 165 that would be partitioned out to a total of three Wolf Management Units. Comment is also being sought on creation of a North Fork Flathead subunit subquota of 2 wolves that would apply to the total quota established in Wolf Management Unit 1.

Public comment will be accepted through 5pm June 19. FWP expects to make a final quota recommendation for FWP Commission consideration and final action on July 9. To comment electronically, follow this link: <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/default.html> and look for the "Proposed 2009 Wolf Quotas and Subquota" bullet and click on the link.

Written comment will also be accepted via postal mail and must be received by 5pm June 19: Drop comments off in person or mail to: FWP, Wildlife Division, Wolf Quota Comments, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620. Written letters can be submitted in their original format electronically at the link above.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

Nothing to report. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.